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EVENTS

# Steampunk blasters a blast at library



Thomas Metthe/Reporter-News Jake Wade (right) and Ann Mount laugh after Wade won the Nerf Wars —; part of the Lib-Con events at the Abilene Public Library —; after hitting Mount in the forehead with a Nerf dart Friday at the downtown library.

*By Scott Kirk, Special to the Reporter-News*

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Give kids — and in this case, adults as well — a small plastic gun, bubble wands, springs and assorted trinkets, and you'll be surprised by what they come up with.

On Friday afternoon, about 20 teens and adults put their imaginations to work to make steampunk derringers as one of the events at the third annual Lib-Con at the Abilene Public Library.

Steampunk is a genre that might best be described as sci-fi meets

the Victorian age. If you've seen the 1999 movie "Wild Wild West," the guns that Dr. Loveless used are steampunk. In fact, that movie is what got Chris Bowman interested in the genre.

"It really is an amazing genre," Bowman said as he created his gun. "There's High England, which is sort of high-tea type, and the Wild West. It started out with H.G. Wells."

The activity was the brainchild of Amanda Sasser, an assistant in the children's library. She bought the replica guns through a mail-order company, then scrounged around for the other parts. The participants painted their guns, then hot-glued whatever else they wanted on them.

"Bet you didn't think people would ever be making these in a library," Sasser said.

Brianna Douglas, a sophomore at Wylie High School, said she got interested in steampunk guns because of the way they look.

"It's the aesthetics of it," Douglas said. "It's just really cool."

Douglas approached her weapon as if it were a blank canvas.

"I have no idea what I'm going to do," she said.

Meanwhile, Bowman attached a spring to the barrel of his gun and attached a small key to give it a windup appearance.

There was no wrong way to decorate the gun, he said.

"You're going to have people in steampunk who would say you're doing it wrong," he said. "But if you think you're doing it right, you're doing right."

Friday marked the penultimate day in the weeklong Lib-Con, which culminates Saturday with a cosplay chess game and cosplay

contest. In the chess game, people dressed as characters will be used as chess pieces.

Also Saturday, characters from books featured in the Children's Art & Literacy Festival will be featured at the downtown library at 202 Cedar St. from 10-11 a.m.

Other activities will include face painting, an anime marathon and craft events. Free comic books will be handed out as part of Free Comic Book Day.

Friday's events were topped off with Nerf Wars in the basement of the library. Perhaps somewhere a librarian is spinning in her grave while saying "Shh."

"Nah," said Kelsie Wade, the children's librarian. "Librarians are hip."

Wade's husband, Jake, and his brother Daniel were the earliest arrivals for the Nerf Wars.

"The cool thing about it is that two years from now, the library staff is going to be finding remnants of our battle," Jake Wade said. "They're going to be asking, 'How did this Nerf dart get on top of the shelf?'"

Sasser said attendance has been high, with midweek attendance topping attendance for the same period last year.

Saturday "will be the big day," she said.

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